THE SETTING

871 Children of all communities now go to school, and the old prejudice against admitting untouchable students is dying out. In recent years some Mala and Madiga boys joined the school, but most of them attended only in name, playing truant so consistently that they derived little benefit and eventually stopped going altogether. The school is ill-equipped, having some miserable-looking furniture, a few charts and maps and the inevitable blackboard. The master still wields his stick, and among other reasons this explains perhaps the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the lower-class children and their parents for the school.

743 The dispensary is housed in a small room and its adjoining
757 verandah. The rest of the building is used as living-quarters by the Medical Officer. This small dispensary was started by one of the Jagirdars, and has had a succession of Medical Officers who had no qualifications for the job. The present incumbent too is not properly qualified, for he is not even a medical licenciate. He is paid Rs. 45 per month and is supplied with a small quantity of drugs by the Medical Department of the Hyderabad Government.

[177] As a result of contact with the cities, the villagers have developed a great liking for injections, expecting them to work like magic and provide quick and certain cure for all ailments. The Medical Officer, although he is not authorized to give injections, does so in the course of his limited private practice. People go to the dispensary only for the treatment of common ailments, such as scabies, cough and malaria. For want of proper equipment and a qualified medical practitioner, the dispensary at Shamirpet has very few patients. In addition to the allopathic dispensary there are several elderly people in the village who administer herbal preparations according to Indian indigenous systems of medicine.

755 Magic and divination are also employed to a considerable extent by all sections of the people. 'Where herbs and medicines do not work, proper chants and spells do not fail us', the people often say. Indeed, for certain categories of disease and difficulties recourse
757 to divination is often regarded as the only proper remedy. It must be added that increased contact with the cities and the influence of education have greatly enhanced the value of modern medicine in the eyes of the people. There is now practically no prejudice against vaccination, although some people are still afraid of plague and cholera inoculations because they cause pain and fever. A minority of the villagers take advantage of the qualified doctors

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

RITUAL STRUCTURE

5. RELIGION IN DISEASE AND DIFFICULTY

In the two preceding sections an attempt has been made to present the ritual cycle of the community covering firstly the festivals and ceremonies within a normal calendar year, and secondly, the rites and observances concerning the major crises of life. These cycles are rigidly observed, as their observance constitutes the *dharma* or the appropriate way of life, and leads to the prosperity and well-being of the family as well as to a desirable future for the individual after death. With the exception of these festivals, under normal conditions of life, there is very little spiritual or devotional activity in the community. But persistent difficulties, uncommon diseases, and frequent deaths turn the people's thoughts to supernatural factors; events are interpreted in terms of supernatural interferences, and are sought to be remedied by magico-religious procedures.

Most of the common diseases are interpreted as a 'fault in the physical system', and are treated with herbal medicines or modern drugs obtained from the dispensary. Common colds, headaches, fever, stomach-ache, scabies, gonorrhoea and syphilis are regarded as natural diseases, and an effort is made to cure them with medicines. But persistent headaches, intermittent fevers, continued stomach disorders, rickets and other wasting diseases among children, menstrual troubles, repeated abortions, etc., are attributed to supernatural forces. In all such cases medicinal cures as well as propitiation of the 'unseen powers' are attempted simultaneously. Similarly, such calamities as the failure of crops, total blindness, repeated failures in undertakings, deaths of children in quick succession and too many deaths in the family within a short time are taken to indicate 'misfortune' and 'the handiwork of malevolent supernatural forces'. Smallpox, cholera and plague are always attributed to the wrath of various goddesses. For these diseases worship is regarded as the only remedy; and no medicines are administered to the patients.

What are the major factors that cause these difficulties, distresses and deaths? In the village community they are attributed to one or more of the following:

(i) The wrath of ancestor-spirits.
(ii) Unfavourable stars.
(iii) Ghosts and spirits.
(iv) The wrath of gods.
(v) Black magic and witchcraft.

RITUAL STRUCTURE

769 If ancestor-spirits are ignored and 'not given their due' they
753 warn the family by causing some minor—but noticeable—trouble. It is for the members of the family to take this 'timely warning' and remove the cause of the ancestors' anger. Failure in this often leads to serious consequences and irreparable losses. Ill-luck and misfortunes persist all along the way of a person whose 'stars are unfavourable'. Hysteria, fits and 'possession by spirits' are the result of hostility of spirits and ghosts. The village goddesses are known for their violent temperament and retaliate quickly and severely, even for minor offences against them. The all-India gods are comparatively pacific; and punish people only for 'gross disrespect' shown towards them. Enmity may lead to the use of black magic or witchcraft, which may be the root cause of the trouble in many cases of persistent disease and ill-luck.

● 755 Most of the causes need the diagnosis of a specialist. Sometimes the ancestor-spirits convey their anger in dreams to some member of the family. Often the ghost possessing an individual reveals its identity through its victim. But in other cases a proper diagnosis is necessary. Why is the ancestor-spirit angry? What should be done to pacify it? How could the evil influence of unlucky stars be averted? Only the Brahmin or a local seer can answer these questions. For undoing the evil influence of spirits and ghosts the services of a competent specialist must be sought. Similarly, the hostile magician or witch must be matched by a more powerful magician.

[767] The ancestor-spirits are not very difficult to please. When the cause of their anger is known, an apology followed by worship is often enough to appease them. Fasting, repentance and food offerings are generally enough to please the gods. Goddesses are more difficult, and require the sacrifice of a fowl or goat. Unfavourable stars require fasting, worship and certain ceremonies following the recommendations of the Brahmin. The giving of alms to the Brahmin and the poor generally follows these ceremonies. Several different techniques can be employed to keep ghosts and spirits in check, and for counteracting black magic and witchcraft. As far as possible, 'all the reasonable demands of a ghost should be fulfilled', but if it still persists in its mischief 'it should be tied down' and 'kept in captivity'. Against sorcery and witchcraft drastic steps are required. For action under both these categories, i.e. against ghosts, as well as against black magic and witchcraft, three

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

techniques are employed: *mantram* (chants and spells), *yantram* (use of secret formulae and designs) and *chetla kriya* (counter black magic). Amateur practitioners succeed in some cases, but all difficult cases require the intervention of an established specialist. The techniques of these specialists are their closely guarded secrets.

In Shamirpet eleven people claim some knowledge of these techniques; although only three were recognized as having 'real and effective powers'. One person who claimed to be an expert in *chetla kriya*—powerful enough to use black magic as well as to counteract it—died, when this research was in progress.

Fourteen women had some suspicion of witchcraft against them, only two being regarded as established witches. A census of ghosts was difficult, but we listed more than forty of them. Four ghosts were particularly feared. The hillock to the north-west of the village was believed to be the abode of innumerable ghosts, but now it is inhabited by the ghost of a Reddi woman who died in pregnancy. She is known to have attacked several women and children. A Madiga woman who committed suicide by jumping in the well of their settlement also became a ghost. At first she went out of the village and troubled her daughter, but on being 'driven away' from there she is believed to have come back to Shamirpet. The dread of the village, however, is the ghost of a Reddi agriculturist who dwells in the eastern side of the village. Even tough young people are afraid to go 'to his place' at mid-day, dusk or late at night. A young Muslim who died without sex experience is alleged to have interfered with many young women. No effective checks have been improvised so far to keep these ghosts under control. Many others 'have been tamed'. They were the ghosts of persons from the following categories:

(*a*) Persons too much attached to sex, wealth and children.
(*b*) Persons dying without satisfying their sexual cravings.
(*c*) Pregnant women.
(*d*) Persons meeting an accidental death, by falling from a tree, drowning or by lightning.
(*e*) Persons committing suicide.
(*f*) Persons dying with an intense hatred for someone.
(*g*) Persons who have been murdered.

Serious difficulties created by supernatural agencies call for some of the measures enumerated above. For getting over minor

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

THE CHANGING SCENE

Changes in tools and technical processes are also important. 178
Barbers, carpenters, blacksmiths and goldsmiths are now using 413
factory-made tools and instruments. The village tailor has a sewing machine. It is significant that there has been no mentionable change in agricultural tools. In farming methods, however, some changes have taken place. Improved seeds are being used by 178
many cultivators. The value of green manure is realized by an 241
increasing number of agriculturists. Oil cakes, castor, ammonium sulphate, and a special concoction of chemical fertilizers known as 'paddy mixture' are now being used. More attention is given to growing vegetables. A greater percentage of cultivators is now growing 'cash crops'.

Communications too have now improved. Many persons take 178
advantage of the bus service. There are six private bicycles in the 489
village. A shop-keeper has four more which can be hired. The headman of the village has recently bought a 1928 model Ford. The traditional bullock carts are still largely used for transportation of goods, and also for travel.

The opening of a small dispensary in the village, and the 178
availability of excellent facilities of modern medical treatment in 755
the city have considerably changed the attitude of the people 757
towards diseases and their treatment. Although people still believe that smallpox and cholera are the result of the wrath of two goddesses and annually organize ceremonies in their honour on behalf of the village, the old fear of vaccination and inoculation has now practically disappeared. People no longer run away from the village on the appearance of the vaccinator, nor do they offer him bribes or threats for being spared the cruelty of vaccination. Divination, protective magic, chants and spells are all still employed to ward off disease and difficulty, but at the same time increasing use is being made of modern medicine. Age-old prescriptions of indigenous herbs are generally used for fevers and other common ailments. But when the disease takes a serious turn the patient may even be removed to a hospital in the city. Injections which were greatly feared a few decades ago are now eagerly sought as they are believed to give quick and sure relief from all ailments. Some people keep a limited stock of some of the popular and cheap patent medicines. Medicines for virility and strength prominently advertised in newspapers are obtained by post.

The social structure of the community is basically the same, 178

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India TELUGU AW17

[p. 48]

CHAPTER IV

MODES OF WORSHIP IN THE TELUGU COUNTRY

755 LET us suppose that an attack of cholera or small-pox has broken out in a village of South India. We will take a village in the Telugu country, in one of the more backward districts, where life is lived under more primitive conditions than in places where large towns and railways and the influence of the Brāhmans have tended to change old-fashioned ideas and customs.

776 755 782 *A Telugu Village.* The village deity, in this particular village, is called Peddamma, the great mother. The epidemic is a sign that she is angry and requires to be propitiated. So a collection is made for the expenses of a festival, or a rich man offers to pay all expenses, and a propitious day is selected, which in this village may be any day except Sunday or Thursday. Then the potter of the village is instructed to make a clay image of the great mother, and the carpenter to make a small wooden cart, and a buffalo is chosen as the chief victim for the sacrifice.

When the appointed day arrives, the buffalo is sprinkled all over with yellow *turmeric*,[1] while garlands of margosa leaves are hung round its neck and tied to its horns. At about two p.m. it is conducted round the village in procession to the sound of music and the beating of tom-toms. The two sections of the Outcastes, the Mālās and the Mādigās, take the leading

[1] *Curcuma longa* is an Indian plant from the rootstock of which a powder called turmeric is extracted. This powder is used as a dye and also as one of the ingredients of curry-powder.

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUGU AW17

part in the sacrifice, and conduct the buffalo from house to house. One Mādigā goes on ahead, with a tom-tom, to announce that "the buffalo devoted to the goddess is coming." The people then come out from their houses, bow down to worship the buffalo, and pour water over his feet, and also give some food to the Mālās and Mādigās, who form the procession. By about eight p.m. this ceremony is finished, and the buffalo is brought to an open spot in the village and tied up near a small canopy of cloths supported on bamboo poles, which has been set up for the reception of the goddess. All the villagers then assemble at the same place, and at about ten p.m. they go in procession, with music and tom-toms and torches, to the house of the potter, where the clay image is ready prepared. On arriving at his house, they pour about two and a half measures of rice on the ground and put the image on the top of it, adorned with a new cloth and jewels. All who are present then worship the image, and a ram is killed, its head being cut off with a large chopper, and the blood sprinkled on the top of the image, as a kind of consecration. The potter then takes up the idol and carries it out of the house for a little distance, and gives it to a washerman, who carries it to the place where the canopy has been set up to receive it. During the procession the people flourish sticks and swords and spears to keep off the evil spirits, and, for the same purpose, cut limes in half and throw them up in the air. The idea is that the greedy demons will clutch at the golden limes and carry them off, and so be diverted from any attack on the man who carries the image. When the idol has been duly deposited under the canopy, another procession is made to the house of the toddy-drawer. He is the man who climbs the palm trees and draws off the juice which is made into toddy. At his house some rice is cooked, and a pot of toddy and a bottle of *arrack*[1] are produced and duly smeared with yellow turmeric and a red paste, constantly used in religious

[1] Arrack is a native intoxicant.

776 755 782
[273]

worship among the Hindus and called *kunkuma*.[1] The cooked rice is put in front of the pot of toddy and bottle of arrack, a ram is killed in sacrifice, and then the toddy-drawer worships the pot and the bottle. The village officials pay him his fee, three-eighths of a measure of rice, three-eighths of a measure of *cholam*[2] and four annas, and then he carries the pot and bottle in procession, and places them under the canopy near the image of Peddamma. Then comes yet another procession. The people go off to the house of the chief official, the Reddy, and bring from it some cooked rice in a large earthenware pot, some sweet cakes, and a lamb. A large quantity of margosa leaves are spread on the ground in front of the image, the rice from the Reddy's house is placed upon them in a heap, and a large heap of rice, from one hundred to three hundred measures, according to the amount of the subscriptions, is poured in a heap a little farther away.

All these elaborate proceedings form only the preparations for the great sacrifice, which is now about to begin. The lamb is first worshipped and then sacrificed by having its throat cut and its head cut off. A ram is next brought and stood over the first large heap of rice, and is there cut in two, through the back, with a heavy chopper, by one of the village washermen. The blood pours out over the rice and soaks it through. One half of the ram is then taken up and carried to a spot a few yards off, where a body of Asādis are standing ready to begin their part in the ceremonies. The other half of the ram is left lying on the rice. The Asādis then begin to sing a long chant in honour of the deity. Meanwhile, the chief sacrifice is made. The buffalo is brought forward, and the Mādigās kill it by cutting its throat (in some villages its head is cut off). Some water is first poured over the blood, and then the pool of blood and water is covered up carefully with earth, lest any outsider from another

[1] Made of turmeric mixed with lime.
[2] A coarse grain, the staple food of the villagers.
4 [i.e. the toddy-drawer--Analyst]

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUGU AW17

755 776 782 village should come and steal it. The idea is that if any man from another village should take away and carry home even a small part of the blood, that village would get the benefit of the sacrifice. The head of the buffalo is then cut off and placed before the image, with a layer of fat from its entrails smeared over the forehead and face, so as to cover entirely the eyes and nose. The right foreleg is cut off and placed crosswise in the mouth, some boiled rice is placed upon the fat on the forehead, and on it an earthenware lamp, which is kept alight during the whole of the festival. Why the right foreleg should be cut off and placed in the mouth, and what the meaning of it is, I have never been able to discover nor can I conjecture. When I have asked the villagers, they only reply, "It is the custom." But I have found the custom prevailing in all parts of South India, among Tamils, Telugus, and Canarese alike, and I have been informed that exactly the same custom prevails in the Southern Marāṭhā country. It seems to be a very ancient part of the ritual of sacrifice prevailing in South India.[1] This completes the presentation of the sacrifice to the goddess, who is supposed to delight in the food offered, and especially in the blood. A great deal of the food offered is, as a matter of fact, taken

[1] Maharaja Sir V. S. Raṅga Rao Bahadur, G.C.I.E., C.B.E., writes in *The Asiatic Review* for January, 1919: "The Lord Bishop wishes to know why the leg of an animal is put crosswise in its mouth after it has been sacrificed before the village goddess. [695] Among the menial castes of a village there is the practice of a guilty man putting a piece of dry grass crosswise in his mouth when he goes to the head of his village to ask his pardon. It denotes that he has committed a wrong act, as a beast. In places where grass is not available, the person in question puts the first finger of his right hand crosswise in his mouth with the same idea or purpose. Here the animals are sacrificed before the village gods and goddesses by the people in the expectation, or rather with the firm belief, that their sins will be forgiven by those deities, and that their consequences will be thus averted by means of those sacrifices. Instead of putting their fingers in their mouths, as stated before, they put the animal's leg (generally the right leg) crosswise in its mouth. Though I am not sure that this is the explanation of this practice, I presume that it must be along these lines, as no other ground is traceable."

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUG-U AW17

755 776 782 away by the people and eaten in their homes, but the idea is that the goddess takes the essence and leaves the worshippers the material substance. This takes till about three a.m. next morning; and then begins another important part of the ceremonies.

Some of the rice from the heap, over which the ram was sacrificed and its blood poured out, is taken and put in a flat basket, and some of the entrails of the buffalo are mixed with it. The intestines of the lamb, which was first killed, are put over the neck of a Mālā, and its liver is placed in his mouth,[1] while another Mālā takes the basket of rice soaked in blood and mixed with the entrails of the buffalo. A procession is then formed [786] with these two weird figures in the middle. The man with the liver in his mouth is worked up into a state of frantic excitement and is supposed to be inspired by the goddess. He has to be held by men on either side of him, or kept fast with ropes, to prevent his rushing away; and all round him are the *ryots*, *i.e.* the small farmers, and the Mālās, flourishing clubs and swords, and throwing limes into the air, to drive away the evil spirits. As the procession moves through the village, the people shout out "Food! Food!" and the man who carries the basket sprinkles the rice soaked in blood over the houses to protect them from evil spirits. As he walks along, he shouts out, at intervals, that he sees the evil spirits, and falls down in a faint. Then lambs have to be sacrificed on the spot and limes thrown into the air and cocoanuts broken, to drive away the demons and bring the man to his senses. And so the procession moves through the village, amid frantic excitement, till, as the day dawns, they return to the canopy, where the great mother is peacefully reposing.

At about ten a.m. a fresh round of ceremonies begins. Some meat is cut from the carcass of the buffalo and cooked with some cholam, and then given to five little Mālā boys, *siddhalu*, the innocents, as they are called. They are all covered over with a large cloth,

[1] Cf. pp. 109, 148 below

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUGU AW17

and eat the food entirely concealed from view, probably to prevent the evil spirits from seeing them, or the evil eye from striking them. And then some more food is served to the Asādis, who have been for many hours, during the ceremonies of the night, chanting the praises of the goddess. After this the villagers bring their offerings. The Brāhmans, who may not kill animals, bring rice and cocoanuts, and other castes bring lambs, goats, sheep, fowls, and buffaloes, which are all killed by the washermen, by cutting their throats, except the buffaloes, which are always killed by the Mādigās, the lowest class of Outcastes. The heads are all cut off and presented to the goddess. This lasts till about three p.m., when the people go off to the house of the village carpenter, who has got ready a small wooden cart. On their arrival some cooked rice is offered to the cart, and a lamb sacrificed before it, and a new cloth and eight annas are given to the carpenter as his fee. The cart is then dragged by the washermen, to the sound of horns and tom-toms, to the place of sacrifice. The heads and carcasses of the animals already sacrificed are first removed by the Mālās and Mādigās, except the head of the buffalo first offered, which remains in its place till all the ceremonies are finished, when the shrine is removed.

At about seven p.m. another series of ceremonies begins. First a lamb is sacrificed before the goddess, and its blood mixed with some cooked rice, and at the same time a pig is buried up to the neck in a pit at the entrance of the village, with its head projecting above the earth. The villagers go in procession to the spot, while one of the Mādigās carries the rice, soaked in the blood of the lamb, in a basket. All the cattle of the village are then brought to the place and driven over the head of the unhappy pig,[1] which is, of course, trampled to death; and, as they pass over the pig, the blood and rice are sprinkled upon them to preserve them from disease. Then, after this, follows the final ceremony.

[1] Cf. p 58 below.

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AWI India TELUGU A477

755 776 782 The image of the goddess is taken from the canopy by the washerman, and a Mādigā takes the head of the buffalo with its foreleg in the mouth, the forehead and nostrils all smeared over with fat, and the earthen lamp still lighted on the top. They then all go in procession to the boundary of the village, first the men carrying the buffalo's head, next the washerman with the image, and last the small wooden cart. When the procession arrives at the extreme limit of the village lands, they go on, for about a furlong, into the lands of the neighbouring [533] village. There the Asādis first chant the praises of the goddess, then some turmeric is distributed to all the people, and finally the image is divested of all its ornaments and solemnly placed upon the ground and left there. The light on the head of the buffalo is extinguished, and the head itself carried off by the Mādigā, who takes it for a feast to his own house. The object of transporting the goddess to the lands of the next village is to transfer to that village the wrath of the deity, a precaution which does not show much faith in the temper of the goddess, nor much charity towards their neighbours!

Gudivada, near Masulipatam. A somewhat different form of ceremonial prevails in some of the villages of the Telugu country nearer the coast. The village of Gudivada, about twenty miles from the important town of Masulipatam, may be taken as a good specimen of a well-to-do village in a prosperous district, and the ceremonies prevailing there are a fair sample of the cult of the village deities in these parts.

[778] [531] The name of the village deity at Gudivada is Pallalamma. Her image is the figure of a woman with four arms, and a leopard's head under her right foot, carved in bas-relief on a flat stone about three feet high, standing in an open compound, surrounded by a low stone wall. The pūjārī, who is a Śūdra, gave me a full account of the rites and ceremonies. Weekly offerings are made every Sunday, when the pujarī washes the image with water and soap-nut seeds early in the morning, and smears it with turmeric

and kunkuma, offers incense, breaks a cocoanut, and cooks and presents to the image about a seer of rice, which he afterwards eats himself. The rice is provided daily by the villagers. Occasionally fowls and sheep are offered on the Sunday by villagers who have made vows in time of sickness or other misfortunes. When a sheep is sacrificed, it is first purified by washing. The animal is simply killed in front of the image by a Mādigā, who cuts off its head with a large chopper. The blood is allowed to flow on the ground and nothing special is done with it. The head becomes the perquisite of the pūjārī, and the offerer takes away the carcass for a feast in his house. In many villages, both in the Telugu and Tamil districts, water is poured over the sheep's back to see whether it shivers. If it shivers, it is a sign that the goddess has accepted it.[1] Where the people are economical, they keep on pouring water till it does shiver, to avoid the expense of providing a second victim, but, where they are more scrupulous, if it does not shiver, it is taken as a sign that the goddess will not accept it and it is taken away.

A public festival is held whenever an epidemic breaks out. The headman of the village then gets a new earthenware pot, besmears it with turmeric and kunkuma and puts inside some clay bracelets, some necklaces, and ear-rings, three pieces of charcoal, three pieces of turmeric, three pieces of incense, a piece of dried cocoanut, a woman's cloth, and two annas' worth of coppers—a strange collection of miscellaneous charms and offerings. The pot is then hung up in a tree near the image, as a pledge that, if the epidemic disappears, the people will celebrate a festival.

When it does disappear, a thatched shed of palmyra leaves is built near the image, and a special image of clay, adorned with turmeric and kunkuma, is put inside, and beneath it an earthen pot filled with buttermilk and boiled rice. This pot is also smeared with turmeric and

[1] For this widespread superstition see Sir Alfred Lyall, *Asiatic Studies*, I, 19. Cf. pp. 63, 68, 69, 73, 99, below.

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUGU MOTIF

kunkuma, adorned with margosa leaves, covered with an earthenware saucer, and carried in procession through the village during the day, to the exhilarating sound of pipes, horns, and tom-toms, by the village potter, who takes the rice and buttermilk for his perquisite and renews it every morning of the festival at the public expense. The duration of the festival depends on the amount of the subscriptions, but it always lasts for an odd number of days, excluding all numbers with a seven in them, *e.g.* 7, 17, 27, etc. During the night the barbers of the village chant the praises of the goddess, and the Mādigās beat tom-toms near the image.

On the night before the day appointed for the offering of animal sacrifices by the villagers, a male buffalo, called Devara Potu, *i.e.* devoted to the deity, is sacrificed on behalf of the whole village. First, the buffalo is washed with water, smeared with yellow turmeric and red kunkuma, and then garlanded with flowers and the leaves of the sacred margosa tree. It is brought before the image; and a Mādigā cuts off its head, if possible at one blow, over a heap of boiled rice, which becomes soaked with the blood. The right foreleg is then cut off and placed crosswise in its mouth, according to the widespread custom prevailing in South India, the fat of the entrails is smeared over the eyes and forehead, and the head is placed in front of the image. A lighted lamp is placed, not as in the other villages on the head itself, but on the heap of rice soaked with blood. This rice is then put into a basket; and a Mādigā, the village *vetty* or sweeper, carries it round the site of the village, sprinkling it on the ground as he goes. The whole village goes with him, but there is no music or tom-toms. The people shout out as they go "Poli! Poli!" *i.e.* "Food! Food!" and clap their hands and wave their sticks above their heads to keep off the evil spirits. The rice offered to the goddess, but not soaked with blood, is then distributed to the people. What spirits the rice soaked in blood is supposed to feed is not clear, but the object of sprinkling the blood is evidently to ward off evil spirits

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUGU
AW17

and prevent them from coming near the village, and apparently the present idea is that they will be satiated with rice and blood and not want to do any mischief. The original idea was possibly quite different; but this seems to be the intention of the ceremony in modern times. 755 776 782

On the next day, early in the morning, the clay image and the pot are washed and smeared afresh with turmeric and kunkuma. Incense and boiled rice are then offered as on other days, and the pot is taken in procession round the village. When this has been done, about midday, each householder brings his offering of boiled rice, cakes, fruits and flowers, and, in addition, the village as a whole contributes about two hundred or more seers of rice, which is boiled near the pandal. All these offerings are placed in a heap before the image. Then, first, a sheep or a buffalo is offered on behalf of the whole village. Having been duly washed, and smeared with turmeric and kunkuma, and decorated with margosa leaves, its head is cut off by a Mādigā. The blood is allowed to flow on the ground, and some loose earth is thrown upon it to cover it up. The head is offered to the image by the headman of the village. After this various householders, even Brāhmans and Bunniahs, bring animals for sacrifice. All are killed by a Mādigā, and then the heads are all presented and placed in a heap before the goddess. Sometimes an extraordinary number of animals is sacrificed on occasions of this kind, as many as a thousand sheep on a single day. In a village like Gudivada the number of victims is, of course, far less. The question of precedence in the offering of victims constantly gives rise to quarrels among the leading villagers. When I was once visiting Gudivada, there was a case pending before the *tahsildar*, *i.e.* the sub-divisional magistrate, between a *zamindar*, landowner, and a village *munsiff*, *i.e.* a village magistrate, about this knotty point. The heads are taken away by the pūjārīs, potters, washermen, barbers, Mālās and Mādigās, and others who take any official part in the sacrifice. The carcasses of the [691]

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUGU AW1

755 776 782 private sacrifices are taken away by the offerers, and that of the public victim belongs to the headman of the village. The rice, fruit, etc., are distributed among the various officials. The function lasts from about ten a.m. to five p.m.

In the evening, a cart is brought to the image with nine pointed stakes standing upright in it, two at each of the four corners and one in the centre: on each stake a young pig, a lamb, or a fowl is impaled alive. A Mālā, called a *Pambala*, *i.e.* hereditary priest, then sits in the cart dressed in female attire, holding in his hand the clay image of the goddess which was made for the festival. The cart is dragged with ropes to the extreme boundary of the village lands, and both cart and ropes are left beyond the boundary. The Pambalas take away the animals, which all die during the procession, as their share of the offerings.

796 776 782 785 *Living animals impaled in many villages.* This cruel ceremony of impaling live animals is quite common in the eastern part of the Telugu country,[1] and I have come across it in many villages that I have visited. The Rev. F. N. Alexander, the veteran C.M.S. missionary, who lived over fifty years at Ellore, told me that he witnessed it in the town of Ellore the first year that he went there, and wrote a letter to the *Madras Mail* describing it. As a result of his letter, the practice was forbidden by the Government. So now at Ellore the animals are tied on to the stakes without being impaled; but in many villages near Ellore the custom still survives of impaling the unfortunate animals alive. Sometimes there are only four stakes on the cart, sometimes five, and sometimes more. It is not often that there are as many as nine. In one of the villages of the Kurnool district, I found that a similar barbarity was practised in connexion with the hook-swinging ceremony. On the fifth day of the festival in honour of Aṅkalamma, a large car is constructed, with an arrangement of poles projecting

[1] Cf. pp. 59, 65, 69.

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUGU AW17

about 20 feet in the air. A sheep is then suspended from the pole by iron hooks fastened through the muscles of its back and a band round its middle, and swung round and round. Two or three of the older men in the village said that they had often seen men swing like this with iron hooks fastened into their backs,[1] and that it did not hurt. As soon as the sheep is swung up, buffaloes, sheep and goats are sacrificed, and the car is then dragged in procession through the village.

A cruel pig sacrifice. Sometimes, when there is cattle disease, a pig is buried up to its neck at the boundary of the village, a heap of boiled rice is deposited near the spot, and then all the cattle of the village are driven over the unhappy pig.[2] It is not the custom at Gudivada to sprinkle anything on the cattle as they pass over the poor animal, as is done elsewhere.

There is a remarkable parallel to this form of sacrifice in a description quoted by Mr. E. Thurston, in his *Ethnographical Notes in Southern India*,[3] of an ancient custom among the Lambadis, a wandering tribe of South India:

> "In former times, the Lambadis, before setting out on a journey, used to procure a little child and bury it in the ground up to its shoulders, and then drive their loaded bullocks over the unfortunate victim. In proportion to the bullocks thoroughly trampling the child to death, so their belief in a successful journey increased."

It is possible that this custom of driving the cattle over the head of a buried pig may be connected with the worship of an agricultural goddess, since in ancient Greece the pig was sacred to agricultural deities, *e.g.* Aphrodite, Adonis, and Demeter; but it may also be a survival of some former custom of infanticide or human sacrifice such as prevailed among the Lambadis.

An old man in the Kurnool district once described to me the account that he had received from his fore-

[1] This is the practice in the Hindu *dola-jātra*, swing-festival, celebrated in honour of Durgā, the wife of Śiva. Cf. pp. 61, 76, 82, 83.

[2] See p. 53, 60.

[3] P. 507.

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUGU AW19

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it is common both in the Telugu and Tamil districts to substitute a sheep for a man, and to fasten the iron hooks in the muscles of its back.

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Alleged infanticide among Todas. I have been told that, among the Todas of the Nilgiri Hills, it was formerly the custom to place female children, whom it was not desired to rear, on the ground at the entrance of the mund, *i.e.* a group of huts, and drive buffaloes over them. If they survived this ordeal, they were allowed to live.

It is only fair to add that the Todas themselves deny that this custom ever existed. To quote Mr. Thurston again:[1]

"The practice of infanticide, as it prevailed among the Todas of the Nilgiris, is best summed up in the words of an aged Toda during an interview with Colonel Marshall (*A Phrenologist amongst the Todas*, 1873): 'I was a little boy when Mr. Sullivan (the first English pioneer of the Nilgiris) visited these mountains. In those days it was the custom to kill children, but the practice has long died out, and now one never hears of it. I don't know whether it was wrong or not to kill them, but we were very poor, and could not support our children. Now every one has a mantle (*putkŭli*), but formerly there was only one for the whole family. We did not kill them to please any god, but because it was our custom. The mother never nursed the child, and the parents did not kill it. Do you think we could kill it ourselves? Those tell lies who say we laid it before the open buffalo-pen so that it might be run over and killed by the animals. We never did such things, and it is all nonsense that we drowned it in buffalo's milk. Boys were never killed—only girls; not those who were sickly and deformed—that would be a sin; but, when we had one girl, or in some families two girls, those that followed were killed. An old woman (kelachi) used to take the child immediately it was born, and close its nostrils, ears and mouth with a cloth thus (here pantomimic action). It would shortly droop its head, and go to sleep. We then buried it in the ground. The kelachi got a present of four annas (4d.) for the deed.' The old man's remark about the cattle-pen refers to the Malagasy custom of placing a new-born child at the entrance of a cattle-pen, and then driving the cattle over it, to see whether they would trample on it or not."

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Masulipatam. At Masulipatam, where ceremonies are performed very similar to those at Gudivada

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 507.

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUGU AW17

755 776 782 during an epidemic, a washerman carries the earthenware pot, half full of buttermilk and adorned with margosa leaves, round the village to the sound of tom-toms. As it goes round, the washerman stops at each house and the wife comes out and pours water beside the pot on the ground and does reverence to the pot, imploring the goddess not to let any evil spirit come to the house; and then she puts more rice and buttermilk into it. When it is full, it is taken back to the shrine and another brought in its place. As this procession continues for fifteen days, the accumulation of rice and buttermilk must be considerable. It is ultimately consumed by the washermen, potters, Mālās and Mādigās, who take part in the festival. The real sacrifice begins on the sixteenth day and lasts for a month. Cotton-thread and all the rice and buttermilk collected from the villagers are offered to the image. The images themselves are smeared with turmeric, and dots of kunkuma are put on them, and finally on the last day a male buffalo, called *Devara-Potu*, *i.e.* devoted to the goddess, is brought before the image and its head cut off by the head Mādigā of the town. The blood is caught in a vessel and sprinkled over some boiled rice, and then the head, with the right foreleg in the mouth, is placed before the shrine on a flat wicker basket, with the rice and blood on another basket just below it. A lighted lamp is placed on the head, and then another Mādigā carries it on his own head round the village, with a new cloth dipped in the blood of the victim tied round his neck. This is regarded here and elsewhere as a very inauspicious and dangerous office; and the headman of the village has to offer considerable inducements to persuade a Mādigā to undertake it. Ropes are tied round his body and arms and held fast by men walking behind him, as he goes round, to prevent his being carried off by evil spirits, and limes are cut in half and thrown into the air, so that the demons may catch at them instead of at the man. It is believed that gigantic demons sit on the tops of tall trees ready to swoop down and carry him away, in

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELEGU AW17

order to get the rice and the buffalo's head. The idea of carrying the head and rice round a village, so the people said, is to draw a kind of cordon on every side of it and prevent the entrance of the evil spirits. Should any one in the town refuse to subscribe for the festival, his house is omitted from the procession, and left to the tender mercies of the devils. This procession is called *bali haranam*;[1] and in this district *inams*, rent-free lands, are held from Government by certain families of Mādigās for performing it. Besides the buffalo, large numbers of sheep and goats and fowls are sacrificed, each householder giving at least one animal. The head Mādigā who kills the animals takes the carcass and distributes the flesh among the members of his family. Often cases come into the courts to decide who has the right to kill them. As the sacrifice cannot wait for the tedious processes of the law, the elders of the village settle the question at once, pending an appeal to the courts. But in the town of Masulipatam, a Mādigā is specially licensed by the Municipality for the purpose, and all disputes are avoided.

Cocanada. At Cocanada there is only one Grāma-Devatā, Nukalamma (from Nuku, a Tamil word, meaning "to beat"); but she is very ill-tempered, they told me, and gives much trouble. Curiously enough, the present pūjārī is a woman of the fisherman caste. The office was hereditary in her family and she is the only surviving member of it. A male relative acts as deputy-pūjārī. Offerings are made to Nukalamma every day, doubtless on account of her temper. One custom I found observed here, which is not uncommon in these parts. When a victim's head has been cut off, it is put before the shrine and water poured on it. The offerer then waits to see whether the mouth opens. If it does, it is a sign that the sacrifice is accepted.[2] Another ceremony observed here is significant and, doubtless, a relic of the primitive idea

[1] Sanksrit for "presentation of the offering."
[2] See p. 55 n. 1, above.

doors of the shrine are kept shut for three days. On the fourth day the doors are opened, the coagulated mass of blood, grain, and gram is carefully washed, and the grain and gram are separated on the ground behind the shrine, in order to see which of the various kinds of grain has sprouted. All the ryots eagerly assemble to watch the result, and whichever is found to have sprouted, is regarded as marked out by the goddess as the right kind of grain to sow that year. This method of determining which crop to sow is common in both the Godavari and Masulipatam districts. In these sacrifices to Nukalamma, too, the application of the blood is specially noticeable. As soon as the victim is killed, a small quantity of the blood is smeared on the sides of the door-posts of the shrine; the deputy-pūjārī dips his finger in the blood and applies it to his forehead; then all the other people present do the same; and afterwards some boiled rice and some turmeric powder are mixed with the blood, and a little of the mixture is sprinkled on the head of the Mādigā who holds the basin to catch the blood.

When an epidemic of cholera breaks out, another goddess, called Maridiamma, is installed in the place of the Nukalamma. A log of margosa wood, about three feet high and six inches in diameter, is cut and roughly carved at the top into the shape of a head, and then fixed in the ground with a pandal of leaves and cloths over it. Then the procession of the earthen pot half filled with buttermilk and rice is conducted, very much in the same way as at Masulipatam,[1] every day till the epidemic subsides. After that, some ten or twelve small carts are made, about six feet square, with three pointed stakes standing up on each side, on which live animals are impaled, as in other parts of the Telugu country.[2] The carts are partly filled with boiled rice and curry stuff prepared at the shrine, the blood of the victims sacrificed being poured over the rice. I was told that live animals were only impaled if a cart did

[1] See p. 62 above. [2] See p. 58 above.

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUGU AW 17

not move properly as it was dragged to the boundary, since that is regarded as a sign that the goddess is angry and needs to be appeased.

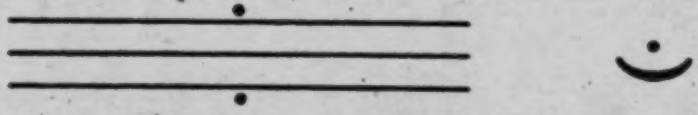
Ellore. The number of victims slaughtered at some of these festivals is enormous. At Ellore, which is a town of considerable size and importance, I was told that at the annual festival of Mahālakshmī about a thousand animals are killed in one day, rich people sending as many as twenty or thirty. The blood then flows down into the fields behind the place of sacrifice in a regular flood, and carts full of sand are brought to cover up what remains on the spot. The heads are piled up in a heap about fifteen feet high in front of the shrine, and a large earthen basin about one-and-a-half feet in diameter is then filled with gingelly oil and put on the top of the heap, a thick cotton wick being placed in the basin and lighted. The animals are all worshipped with the usual *namaskāram*, *i.e.* folded hands raised to the forehead, before they are killed. This slaughter of victims goes on all day.

At midnight about twenty or twenty-five buffaloes are sacrificed. Their heads are cut off by a Mādigā pūjārī and with their carcasses are thrown upon large heaps of rice which have been presented to the goddess, till the rice is soaked with blood.

The subsequent ceremonies illustrate again the varieties of local custom. The rice is collected in about ten or fifteen large baskets, and, instead of being carried by a Mādigā, is carried on a large cart drawn by buffaloes or bullocks, with the Mādigā pūjārī seated on it. As the cart moves along, Mādigās sprinkle the rice on the streets and on the walls of the houses shouting "Poli! Poli!" ("Food! Food!"). A large body of men of different castes, Śūdras, Kommas, and Outcastes, go with the procession: but only the Mādigās and Mālās (the two sections of the Outcastes) shout "Poli," the rest following in silence. They have only two or three torches to show them the way, and no tom-toms nor music. Apparently the idea is that, if they make a noise or display a blaze of light, they will attract the evil spirits,

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUGU AW 17

the house outside with cow-dung and make three horizontal lines with kunkuma (a red paste of turmeric and lime), with a dot above and below, and a semi-circle on the right side with a dot in the middle, thus:—



The symbol on the right represents the sun and moon: that on the left is the Śaivite sectarian mark. They sacrifice to these symbols sheep, goats, and fowls. It is curious that, in these private sacrifices at home, they pour water on the sheep and goats to see whether they shiver, as a sign of acceptance,[1] though this is not done in the public sacrifices at Ellore.

Dharmaja-Gudem, near Ellore. At a village called Dharmaja-Gudem, about sixteen miles from Ellore, while the main features of the festivals are the same as those found elsewhere, there are two or three peculiarities, which deserve notice. The ordinary grāma-devatās of the village are Ellaramma, Gaṅgamma, Mutyalamma, and Ravelamma, who are represented by four stone pillars about six feet high, with figures of women carved on them, standing in an open field on the outskirts of the village: but when an epidemic breaks out, Mutyalamma, Gaṅgamma, Aṅkamma and Mahālakshmīamma are the deities propitiated, and special images are made of them. Those of the first three are made of clay, but that of Mahālakshmīamma is made of turmeric kneaded into a paste. Then, again, it is noticeable that a Brāhman acts as pūjārī of Mahālakshmī, a washerman as pūjārī of Gaṅgamma, and a potter as pūjārī of Aṅkamma. The Brāhman pūjārī presides over the worship for the greater part of the festival, which lasts for about three months, and during that time the people come almost every day and offer flowers, fruits, cocoanuts, camphor and incense, but no animal sacrifices. All this time, too, some nautch-

[1] See p. 55 above.

25: Whitehead M-S (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUGU AW17

776 to the shrine and presented in a heap before the image,
796 with a lighted lamp on the top of it, made of rice flour
241 kneaded into a paste, and holding about one pint of oil.[1]
782 Some toddy is poured on the ground to the east of the rice by the washerman; incense and camphor are burnt; while the people make namaskāram (salutation with folded hands raised to the forehead) to the image. As many as two hundred sheep and goats are then killed, and fowls are brought by the poorer people. In this festival, the rice soaked in the blood of the victims is not sprinkled on the streets of the village nor over the houses, but each ryot gives a handful of it to one of his field servants (an Outcaste), who takes and sprinkles it over his master's fields. Three handfuls of the crop are cut on the same day to inaugurate the harvest. No buffaloes are sacrificed during this festival.

755 On the other hand, when an epidemic breaks
776 out, there is a special festival, in which five or six buffaloes
782 are sacrificed as well as about three hundred sheep and goats. The buffaloes are killed last of all. One special buffalo, called *Pedda-Veta*, great sacrifice, is reserved to the end, and killed at about ten p.m. Nothing special is done with the blood of the other buffaloes nor with that of the sheep and goats, but the blood of the Pedda-Veta is allowed to flow on to some of the rice, as soon as the head is severed, and both head and carcass are placed upon the rice heap. The head, as usual, has the right foreleg put in the mouth, with fat smeared over the face and a lighted lamp above it.

At about eleven p.m. the head is carried by aMālā, not by a Mādigā in this village, on his own head three times round the boundaries of the village site, and the rice soaked in blood is sprinkled by the Mālās on the ground, as they go, and on any cattle they happen to meet, accompanied by the same weird and excited procession as elsewhere.

778 The illustration facing this page represents a shrine of Poshamma, a goddess worshipped by the Mālās. On the top of the shrine stands an earthenware lamp.

[1] See p. 39.

[P 71]

CHAPTER V

MODES OF WORSHIP IN THE CANARESE COUNTRY

171 THE Canarese are closely allied ethnologically to the Telugus,[1] and we should naturally expect, therefore, to find a close connexion between the ceremonies used by the two peoples in the worship of their village goddesses. A brief account of the ceremonies used in different parts of the Canarese country will show how far this is actually the case.

776 796 *Bellary District.* In the Bellary district Durgamma,[1] Suṅkalamma, and Uramma are very commonly worshipped. Uramma means simply the village goddess, and is equivalent to the general term grāma-devatā. Her festival is not celebrated annually, but when there is a specially good crop, or when cholera or plague break out. The following account of it was given me by an Asādi of a village near Bellary, and may be taken as describing fairly the general type of such festivals and sacrifices throughout the district.

776 We will suppose that cholera has broken out in the village. The villagers then make vows to offer the sacrifice if the epidemic ceases. The day appointed for the festival is invariably a Tuesday, and on the previous Tuesday a basin-shaped earthen lamp, filled with oil and furnished with a stout cotton wick, is placed in the house of the *Reddy* (village magistrate) and kept lighted till the festival and all the ceremonies are ended. The carpenter, also, prepares beforehand a wooden image of the goddess and a small cart, while

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[1] Durgā is one of the many names of Kālī, the wife of Śiva.